ICT Consortium

Report on Baseline Research and Evaluation Framework

Paul Ticher & Andrea Eaves

September 2004

Contents

The authors

This report has been written by Paul Ticher (paul@paulticher.com) and Andrea Eaves (eavesandrea@hotmail.com).

Paul has been researching and advising on voluntary sector ICT for over 20 years and is now an independent consultant and trainer. He is the author of *Leading the Way to ICT Success* (with Aba Maison and Martin Jones), published in 2002 and a survey of ICT use in Herefordshire and Worcestershire (with Dr. Simon N. Davey), published in 2004.

Andrea Eaves has over 10 years experience working in the voluntary sector, managing a wide variety of information and ICT projects. Her experience includes the development and delivery of information systems, and project management on the implementation of web sites and other ICT projects in small to medium voluntary organisations.

Further copies of this report, and of the executive summary, are available from Nicky Thompson at NCVO, or from the ICT Consortium web site, www.ictconsortium.org.uk

1. Introduction

Background

The ICT Consortium is a group of voluntary sector organisations set up to plan and deliver a co-ordinated framework of ICT guidance, good practice, advice and support for voluntary and community organisations, accessible at a local level. Its aim is to improve voluntary and community sector ICT infrastructure so that voluntary and community organisations are enabled to achieve their missions more efficiently and effectively through the better use of ICT.

The Consortium is a partnership, currently of 26 organisations, with a Steering Group comprising AbilityNet, IT 4 Communities, London Advice Services Alliance, National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service, and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. These organisations have worked together for a number of years, collaborating on infrastructure projects and leading ICT initiatives.

The Consortium's current programme is inspired by the government's plans to promote the development of voluntary and community sector infrastructure. The government's welcome recognition of the need for this, and for ICT support in particular, is an opportunity the sector has long been waiting for. ICT has become a crucial component of many organisations' work but for too long it has been inadequately funded and poorly managed — not in all organisations, of course, but in far too many. Often the fault is not theirs, but is due to a lack of suitable support and advice, and the unwillingness of funders to recognise that spending on ICT is not optional but is a central cost of service delivery. If voluntary and community organisations are to play their full potential role in our society, these difficulties must be addressed, and it is this that the Consortium's programme seeks to do.

This piece of research

In July 2004 the authors were commissioned to develop an evaluation framework for the Consortium's programme of work and to carry out baseline research with which future evaluation data can be compared. This piece of work comprised:

- a survey to give a snapshot of how organisations are using ICT[1], and to form the baseline for follow-up research.
- a small amount of qualitative research to provide additional context to the baseline survey.
- a literature review, to identify useful sources of additional relevant information and analysis.
- a proposed evaluation framework for the Consortium's programme of work.

It is worth noting the tight timescale — from approval in July to final report at the end of September — as well as the fact that data gathering would inevitably take place during the peak summer holiday season.

[1] Information and Communications Technologies. A glossary of technical terms is in Appendix A.

The baseline survey and qualitative interviews

Despite these obstacles, the survey attracted nearly 1,000 responses (on paper and on line) during July and August 2004. From these a picture can be built up of the diverse pattern of ICT use among voluntary and community organisations and the range of support needs they present. The survey also asked questions relevant to specific elements of the Consortium's work programme. Details of the survey methodology can be found in Appendix C.

The qualitative support to the survey involved telephone interviews with selected individuals who had indicated that they were willing to be contacted by phone and whose organisations appeared to have recently made significant ICT investments. The results of this work are incorporated into the section on the baseline survey.

The literature review

The literature review was particularly important because of the context in which this work was carried out. Funding from the Active Communities Unit of the Home Office for ICT infrastructure developments was made available simultaneously through all Government Offices of the Regions. Several "Early Spend" projects delivered their reports in June 2004 (or in some cases were granted extensions of up to a few months). A further series of projects, including this one, received "Exemplar funding" with a deadline of September 2004.

It seemed essential to take advantage of all this work going on across the country and to draw together the lessons of these parallel pieces of work. Accordingly, the literature review did not just examine published work. Efforts were also made to contact researchers currently engaged in relevant projects and to obtain as much input as possible from them, in the form of advance copies of their results, where available, and in some cases through informal discussions with the researchers themselves.

The bibliography in this report concentrates on these more recent pieces of work, in an attempt to establish as comprehensive and up to date a resource as possible.

The evaluation framework

The proposed evaluation framework is, in many ways, the core of this piece of work. While the baseline research usefully corroborates the findings of other recent work, the evaluation framework is the basis on which the Consortium's work will be judged. However, it is not just the Consortium which needs to assess the progress of voluntary and community sector ICT.

We have therefore attempted to produce a framework which is:

- valid,
- useful to funders,
- useful to practitioners, and

- easy to apply.

One key feature of the framework is that it recognises the different expectations that should apply to organisations of different sizes and complexities, and to those at different stages of their development. It also identifies key questions as markers for a wide range of connected issues. The intention is that it should be possible to assess relatively quickly, and with minimal effort, how well an organisation is using its ICT, compared with others in a similar situation.

That is not the whole story, of course, as it doesn't reveal why an organisation is in that position, nor what contribution the work of the Consortium — or other, local support agencies — has made. The framework therefore also suggests how these questions should be approached.

Acknowledgements and thanks

Thanks must go firstly to the staff and volunteers from nearly 1,000 organisations who took the trouble to complete the questionnaire. Important lessons have been learned from their efforts.

Valuable lessons have also been learned from the literature review, and we would like to thank all those researchers whose work we have drawn on, and in particular those who allowed us to see advance copies of their reports so that we could take their work into account.

We would also like to thank Diane Conchie for her work on data entry, and the Consortium members for guiding the work with a light touch — but responsively and helpfully.

Paul Ticher & Andrea Eaves
September 2004

2. Evaluation framework

The ultimate aim of doing anything in the voluntary and community sector is to benefit a group of people or a cause. When used appropriately, ICT enables organisations in the sector to operate more effectively, thereby supporting this aim. The value of ICT is borne out both in responses to our survey — where the vast majority of respondents rate ICT as "vital" to their operation — and in other research. Numerous case studies, for example, have described how ICT allows organisations to do things they would not otherwise be able to do.

In general, therefore, the increased adoption of ICT is worth pursuing, and the aim of the ICT Consortium's programme is to build the capacity of voluntary and community organisations to use ICT effectively. The programme can be summarised as:

1. Increased managerial understanding and awareness of the strategic benefits of ICT and better strategic planning.
2. Access to a range of ICT advice, training and support services.
3. Access to different models of ICT support including circuit riders and *pro bono* initiatives.
4. More relevant and affordable private sector products and services.
5. Funder recognition of the critical role and cost benefits of ICT.
6. Special emphasis on particular groups, including people with disabilities and elderly people.

The purpose of the evaluation framework is to assess how well the Consortium is achieving these objectives. In addition, relevant questions have also been introduced into the baseline research (see Section 3).

Challenges in designing the evaluation framework

In developing such an evaluation framework there are two key challenges. Firstly, it is difficult to establish "causality" when measuring long-term impact. For example, the ideal way to evaluate the Consortium's programme might be to explore the following key questions with voluntary and community groups:

- How has ICT allowed you to do things better — to save money or time, for example?
- How has ICT allowed you to do better things — providing services which would not have been possible without the technology?

By measuring the direct impact on front-line organisations and tracing back the factors that influenced that impact, in theory one should be able to discern a positive influence from the work of the Consortium. However, in practice, it is near impossible to do this when inputs are several steps removed from the ultimate outcome, and when other agencies are acting in parallel with the Consortium. Therefore we need to measure more specific outcomes and make informed deductions from other information about how these are likely to affect the overall aim of improving ICT use.[2]

[2] For more on measuring impact in the voluntary and community sector see Wainwright, S. *Measuring Impact: a guide to resources*, NCVO Publications, 2002.

The second issue is in defining effective ICT use. Counting the number of computers in use is obviously relatively easy, but not particularly useful if we want to know what effect their use is having. The Consortium's objectives are obviously based on wide experience of what constitutes effective use. Based on this, and through reviewing previous work, we propose a set of measures which meet the criteria set out in our Introduction and which — while not directly measuring effectiveness — are useful indicators of how likely it is that an organisation is using ICT effectively.

An important aspect of this dilemma is that ICT effectiveness will look different in different types of organisations at different stages of development. For example, the indicators for "better strategic planning of ICT" in a large national body with hundreds of staff are not the same as those in a very small volunteer-run organization. The evaluation framework should recognize this, and should be flexible enough to identify and measure improvements for different categories of organisation. This is particularly important so that the Consortium can identify where it is having the most impact and where the most support is required in future.

A two-tier framework

We propose a two-tier framework which will allow the Consortium to evaluate not just the immediate outputs from its programme of work, but also the wider outcomes. At the first level we would measure the immediate outputs of the activities in the Business Plan and, where possible, their direct impact.

The Business Plan contains specific indicators for each activity — such as the number of ICT planning seminars held, the number of organisations attending, and the participants' immediate, or short-term, assessment of the value of the activity. In addition, relevant questions have been used in the baseline research. These relate in particular to objectives (4) and (5) — the demand for sector-specific commercial products, and the perceived attitude to ICT of funders — while information relevant to the other objectives can also be gleaned from the baseline survey. The responses to these questions are reported on and discussed in the following section.

In order to get an indication of how these outputs translate into ICT improvements within organisations, we propose a framework using the following principles:

- Based on previous research and practical experience a "model of ICT effectiveness" is proposed for organisations of different sizes.
- For each grouping, there is a set of appropriate indicators. These are expanded on below.
- Data from the survey is used to profile where organisations are now against the model.
- By repeating the survey in 2–3 years time with the same sample it will be possible to assess how far groups have moved and identify those where further investigation would determine which factors had had the most influence.

The model of ICT effectiveness

It seems clear that three broad areas contribute to the effective use of ICT[3]:

- **Decision-making and planning**
  As with all other activities, effective use of ICT is unlikely to occur by accident. Most managers recognise this, but many feel less confident than they would like to be in making decisions about ICT. Good planning and decision-making on ICT involve knowledge about the potential of the technology and a sense of how this potential may be translated into practical benefits for the organisation. They also require awareness of the possible pitfalls and how to avoid them.

  For managers to feel on top of all this, while staying focused on the organisation's overall strategy and business plan, can be a tall order for those who do not feel themselves to be particularly technically minded. The more an organisation has done to address this, the more likely it is to be using ICT effectively.

- **ICT facilities**
  Having decided what to do, the organisation then needs the money and technical input to acquire the necessary equipment and software, and to get it installed and running. It is possible to identify levels of basic facilities which should be available to organisations of different sizes and different stages of development, and to assess whether any particular organisation is falling significantly short of this basic provision. There may be a good reason why a particular organisation has taken the decision not to follow the "standard" path, but for most it is a valid benchmark.

- **ICT administration and support**
  ICT, unfortunately, does not run itself. Like most complex systems it needs constant maintenance and attention. Users also need suitable training and they need support in dealing with the inevitable problems. Although this is an area in which organisations are starting to take more interest, as they come to realise the extent of their dependence on ICT, effectiveness can still be seriously hampered even by relatively minor gaps in maintenance, support or training.

Each of these areas will now be discussed in more detail, and the key indicators identified for different sizes of organisation.

There are, of course, many dimensions on which organisations can be analysed, but the one which seems most appropriate for considering their adoption of ICT is size of expenditure (on all headings other than grant-making, which would obviously distort the picture). Although this is fairly crude, it has the following advantages:

- The data is easy to collect.
- Size of expenditure relates closely to the number of staff employed (if any), but asking directly about staff numbers raises unnecessary complexity because of

[3] Readers may wish to compare this model with that derived independently by the Department of Trade and Industry. See: www.ukonlineforbusiness.gov.uk/benchmarking2003/index.htm

the need to account for a mix of full-time and part-time paid staff alongside volunteers who may act in many respects as staff, albeit unpaid.
- For many of the basic ICT requirements it is the size of the staff (if any) that determines the level at which an organisation should be aiming.
- The size of the organisation also gives a good indication of its capacity to plan, its ability to pay for advice and support, and its resources for employing support staff, providing training and so on.

Although it is never possible to draw fully accurate distinctions, for the sake of this exercise we group organisations for most purposes into three bands:
- Very small organisations — those with a budget of under £10,000. These are likely to be run entirely by volunteers, usually from their homes.
- Small organisations — with a budget between £10,000 and £100,000. These are most likely to employ a few staff and to have an office base, but not to be large enough to employ specialist support staff.
- Medium-sized (budget £100,000 to £1,000,000) and large (over £1,000,000) organisations. These organisations may have more than one office and are more likely to have multiple projects and to employ specialists. Although this grouping is very broad, breaking the category down further tends to result in very small numbers, especially at the higher levels. Clearly an organisation with just over £100,000 budget would not be "medium-sized" in the commercial sector, and may only have a handful of staff; its needs, however, especially if it is growing, have more in common with those above it than those below it in budget terms. While respecting the differences, it therefore seems appropriate to report on these organisations as a single group.

We suggest that providing support for very small organisations is both difficult and different in nature from supporting those that employ staff and have an office base. Any use of ICT is very likely to be at the discretion of individuals, and not to be a matter of concern to the organisation. These organisations do, however, benefit from ICT developments in the voluntary and community sector, because of the web of connections between organisations. A committee member for a very small organisation may be employed by a larger organisation, or their partner may be, or they may participate in training events — all of these can provide direct support to the individual's ICT use and therefore indirectly to the very small organisation.

At the other end of the scale, the large organisations — with a budget of over £1,000,000 for our purposes — are likely to be almost self-sufficient in ICT, or to have the resources to buy in what help they need from commercial sources.

It is in the middle, with the medium-sized and small organisations, that infrastructure support organisations can play the greatest role. Many of these are not large enough to support a range of staff with specialist skills and knowledge. Even if they are able to employ a part-time ICT worker to provide support and administration for their ICT, that person is unlikely to have all the skills which may be necessary, or the time to research new possibilities or better ways of doing things. Commercial organisations do not usually have sufficient knowledge of voluntary-sector specific software and other concerns, and their pricing often puts them out of reach. The way to fill the gap is to have locally-based support specifically for the voluntary and community sector.

Decision-making and planning

ICT strategies, budgets and policies

It is too simplistic to ask merely "Do you have a written ICT strategy?" While this might be expected of a large organisation, it is unreasonable to expect it of a small or even medium-sized organisation. Many of these will not have the time or resources to produce regular written strategies of any sort; despite this, they may well have a very clear idea of where they are aiming for.

On the other hand, the survey results show a clear correlation between the existence of a strategy and the level of ICT investment. Whether or not it is the strategy that leads to the investment, or the desire to invest which requires a strategy is beside the point: where an organisation has a strategy it is more likely to be investing in a wider range of ICT. The presence of a written strategy is therefore a useful marker, as well as a benefit in its own right.

All organisations, in addition, should be able to show that they have thought from time to time — or asked someone else to think for them — about how ICT could be used to improve their service delivery, or provide new types of service.

Where organisations are too small to warrant full-blown strategies, it still makes sense to ask how far ahead they plan their ICT spending, and what basis they make their decisions on — for example whether the drivers for spending are internal (such as a board member with ICT experience or a commitment to delivering a particular kind of service), or external (such as demands of their parent body or local authority).

While it is possible to spend money on ICT without a dedicated budget, the spending is more likely to be strategic if there is a specific budget allocation, and the amount spent often be greater if the needs are identified in advance and the resources found. Again, a small or very small organisation may not need a specific ICT budget, but it should be able to identify how much it spends on ICT.

The smallest organisations may not actually spend any of their own money on ICT. All their ICT resources are quite likely to be provided through volunteers using their own home computers and other equipment. In these cases an ICT budget is rarely appropriate, but it would not be unreasonable to ask the organisation whether it has taken a view on the format in which its information should be stored, for example (so that it can be passed on if the responsible person changes).

Other policies which become necessary as an organisation grows include:

- an acceptable use policy, especially where staff are given internet access.
- a Data Protection policy.

Possible indicators for ICT strategies, budgets and policies		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Encourage volunteers to use ICT appropriately Policy on file formats Policy on reimbursing costs	Defined ICT budget Statement of ICT strategy Data Protection policy, if appropriate	ICT & budget incorporated in business plan Data Protection policy Acceptable use policy
Evidence of having thought about how ICT could be used to improve service delivery		

Use of ICT to assist in decision-making

Information is "that which reduces uncertainty", and information technology has an important role in providing a basis for better decision-making. This can range from the use of spreadsheets or statistical records packages to record, analyse and present significant aspects of an organisation's work to the use of communications tools, such as intranets or web sites, to provide information quickly to those who need it.

Even the smallest organisation can benefit from linking its committee members and other decision-makers by e-mail, enabling faster decisions, involving more people. No longer does it depend on who happens to live near the Chair or to be at home when they are phoned in an emergency.

Larger organisations can make use of the same communications channels, improving governance by providing their decision-makers with more information more quickly and, equally importantly, enabling committee members to participate more easily — for example by submitting and circulating reports and ideas electronically directly to each other rather than through a cumbersome paper distribution system.

The other aspect of decision-making — production of budgets and statistics electronically — has been well established for a long time in many medium-sized and most large organisations. This is becoming increasingly important as funders demand more and more detailed information about the work they are funding, or might fund. No organisation engaged in significant amounts of fundraising can afford not to be able to produce accurate figures quickly, and in an attractive format.

That is not to say, however, that it is easy. At the smaller end of the scale financial records and case records or service user records may be kept on paper, or in systems which are not compatible with the spreadsheets which are most often used for analysis. In larger organisations, as soon as there are multiple projects with multiple recording systems and possibly multiple funding streams, the problem of integrating the information into a coherent and accurate picture becomes a serious issue

Possible indicators for use of ICT to assist in decision-making		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Use of e-mail between decision-makers	Spreadsheets analyse and present data effectively E-mail for decision-makers	Management information system Intranet & e-mail

Measures to address inequalities in access to ICT (the "digital divide")

Because the voluntary and community sector takes seriously its mission to be inclusive, it is important that the use of ICT should not inadvertently result in the exclusion of those who do not have access to it on grounds of cost, location, education or disability. All organisations should be seeking to provide alternative channels for those who cannot access electronic services, while at the same time making those services as accessible as possible. For some organisations it will also be appropriate to be taking positive steps to address the digital divide, perhaps through training or by providing access to ICT for their client group.

All organisations regardless of size must, of course, make "reasonable adjustments" under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 for any employee who, for example, needs adapted equipment in order to be able to use ICT effectively.

Possible indicators for measures to address the digital divide		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Disability Discrimination Act compliance		
Care not to exclude those without ICT access	Accessible web site Care not to exclude those without ICT access	Fully accessible web site Range of access methods to services
	Provision of ICT training/facilities if appropriate	

ICT facilities

Installation of an appropriate local area network when it becomes relevant

In the past many organisations have shied away from installing a network, on the understandable grounds that it can be complex and expensive. There is little doubt now, however, that the benefits almost always outweigh the disadvantages, even for an organisation with just two or three computers. These benefits include the facilities to:

- share documents and data
- share standard templates and procedures
- share resources (such as printers or internet connections)
- make robust arrangements for backing up
- implement better security
- encourage collaborative working (from shared calendars through to workflow systems)
- pool information through organisation-wide databases and contact lists
- centralise software updates and other maintenance tasks
- manage e-mail and internet connections more effectively

Of these, it is probably the last which tips the balance for those organisations which might not otherwise be able to justify a network. Without a network, providing internet facilities at more than one computer in the same office is likely to result in duplication of resources and inefficiency.

Apart from that, a network provides a platform which is necessary for most ICT uses other than simple aids to personal productivity such as word processors and spreadsheets.

For small organisations a peer to peer network (see Glossary in Appendix A) may be appropriate, although it does not by any means offer all the benefits of a client-server network. A small organisation with ambitions to grow may be better off investing in a client-server network straight away if it can afford the additional initial outlay.

Where an organisation has staff in more than one office, or where a proportion of staff regularly work from home, a local area network may not be enough. A virtual private network (see Glossary), even in a small organisation, may be worth the investment, since it allows all users to benefit from the same access, rather than excluding those at home or in sub-offices.

Possible indicators for ICT network		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Probably not appropriate	Peer to peer network	Client-server (or thin client) network
	Virtual private network, if appropriate	

Attention to security, and in particular back-up and business continuity

The baseline survey (see Section 3) found that, while nearly 85% of respondents felt that computers were "vital" to their organisations, nevertheless only 54% have a backup routine which is activated "rigorously". Studies in the commercial sector regularly report that many companies which suffer a significant loss of data fold within a few years; the voluntary and community sector is unlikely to be much different — certainly the disruption to services would be bad news for service users or clients as well as for staff, volunteers and funders of the services.

Not only this, an organisation's approach to backing up says a lot about its approach to ICT in general. If there is:

- a well-structured network (so that key data such as e-mails and e-mail addresses is on the server where it can be easily backed up, not on individual computers),
- good (and enforced) policies on where files and documents should be stored,
- well-designed backup procedures, including off-site storage,
- recovery testing, and
- clear responsibility by a designated person for ensuring that backups occur at the prescribed intervals and that testing is carried out,

then it is quite likely that the organisation will have taken a systematic approach to many other areas of its ICT. If, on the other hand, file storage and backup procedures are haphazard, and backing up is left to the whim of individuals, then much else could also give rise to concern.

Other security issues should of course also be addressed. These include anti-virus precautions, controls over installation of unauthorised software, and a firewall to prevent unwanted intrusion over the internet.

Possible indicators for security and business continuity		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Key data copied to floppy disk or CD Anti-virus on all computers	Working manual backup procedure Anti-virus on all computers Software firewall at least	Automated daily backup Centralised anti-virus Hardware firewall Control over software

Use of broadband internet access, if available and relevant

Just as a local area network provides a platform for a wide variety of activities within an organisation, a broadband connection enables much more effective use of the internet — often for a similar cost to older and slower methods.

The main benefits for e-mail are the "always-on" connection and the fixed cost, so that messages can be sent and picked up far more frequently, while the higher capacity also means that many people can share the connection and that large attachments are less likely to be a problem. Similar benefits apply to the use of the web as a resource: information can be researched and documents downloaded without worrying about the cost or delays in transmission.

An organisation with broadband can think seriously about providing a virtual private network, in order to link several offices or office and home workers, while a connection also makes it easier for an organisation's web site to be updated more frequently and to offer more interactive services and links to live, or almost live, data, for example on a database. (This is not to suggest that organisations should host their own web site via ADSL in most cases.)

As long as ADSL and cable broadband are not universally available, measuring the take-up of different broadband services also gives an indication of the unmet demand in excluded areas.

Possible indicators for broadband access		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Use from home if available	Basic broadband service	Broadband at all sites, speed related to need

Use of internet domain name and individual e-mail addresses for staff (and key trustees or volunteers)

Because the internet is now such an important component of an organisation's ability to communicate, it is important not to approach it haphazardly. The cost of a domain name is negligible for most organisations, and a well-chosen one not only gives a more professional appearance; it also makes it quite possible for people to find the web site by intelligent guess-work. Many organisations have realised this, but some still have a web address which includes their ISP details or, more forgivably, that of a community web site.

A domain name, coupled with an internet service which allows unlimited e-mail names to be placed before the "@" symbol, then allows the organisation to organise its e-mail systematically, giving all staff (and possibly key trustees) their own e-mail addresses. By using a mail server, the organisation can collect all e-mail addressed to its domain centrally, then distribute it to the recipients, whether they are in the office or at other locations. The mail server (which can even be a simple piece of software on a lone computer) not only distributes the incoming mail but keeps back-up copies, and can be used for running outgoing mailing lists and other services.

Once a domain name and appropriate provision by the ISP are available, there should be no need for anyone within an organisation to use any e-mail address other than one based on the domain for work contact. The use of hotmail or other web-based accounts, in particular, gives a very unprofessional appearance (and may even result in messages being rejected by ultra-cautious recipients).

Medium-sized and larger organisations, which are likely to have established "brands" should also consider protecting their brand and reputation by registering domains similar to theirs if possible, to prevent confusion or malicious use.

Possible indicators for internet domain name		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Own domain, or presence on community web site Use of domain name in all e-mail correspondence	Own domain E-mail server Use of domain name in all e-mail correspondence	Own domain Protective registration of similar domains Full internal and external e-mail system

ICT administration and support

Satisfaction levels with the day to day running of ICT systems

ICT which is inappropriate for the demands placed on it, or which is not properly installed or adequately maintained, can cause so many day to day problems that it frustrates the users, makes their lives more difficult, interferes with their work, and appears to negate the potential benefits.

Many issues combine here, including the age and specification of equipment, the choice of software and its degree of standardisation across the organisation, the way equipment and systems (especially networks) are set up, the design and suitability of databases and other data recording systems, and the implementation of security measures — as well as support and training, which are covered separately below.

It is difficult to assess from the outside how well an organisation's ICT is working, and the issues inevitably differ from organisation to organisation. This measure has therefore been phrased as "satisfaction levels" rather than any more objective criteria.

Possible indicators for day to day running		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Satisfaction that day to day problems with ICT are at the lowest reasonable level		

Satisfaction levels with training & support

For many organisations technical support is the biggest ICT headache. It is not something that can be outsourced in its entirety — an organisation needs at least some internal support capacity, if only to identify problems and liaise with the main support providers. For small organisations, in particular, making suitable support arrangements can be both disproportionately costly and difficult.

The effort is worth it, however. From research covered in the Literature review (Section 4), it appears that those organisations most likely to be happy with their ICT support are those which have made a proper arrangement. In smaller organisations this could be a regular volunteer, rather than a paid member of staff. The crucial issue seems to be whether there is a designated support person.

Developing appropriate external support, both at the technical level and for unbiased, accessible strategic advice is, of course one of the principal aims of the ICT Consortium. One would therefore want to see both awareness of the support options and satisfaction with the support given increasing.

As with support, ICT training is frequently recognised as important in theory but under-provided in practice. The issue should not be allowed to drop, however, as there is no question that appropriate skills are an important factor in making the most effective use of ICT. "Training" does not have to mean external, paid-for courses. In-house coaching by colleagues and short sessions dealing with specific issues can be equally effective.

Possible indicators for training and support		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Reliable volunteer support available when needed Training provided if ICT use is essential for any particular role	Designated internal ICT support responsibilities Awareness of external support options Training for all staff up to minimum standards	Internal support worker Formal external support arrangements Regular training needs analysis and funds for training
Satisfaction with internal and external support arrangements Satisfaction that staff and volunteers have the necessary skills		

Avoidance of RSI and health problems

In the same way that ICT developments must take care not to exclude people, they must also not harm people. All organisations should take their health and safety responsibilities seriously — including when staff work from home.

Possible indicators for health & safety		
Very small (under £10,000)	Small (up to £100,000)	Medium/Large (£100,000+)
Health & safety risk assessments carried out for all workers using ICT equipment		

ICT used for service delivery

It will be noted that these evaluation criteria do not specifically address the use of ICT for service delivery (apart from the reference under **Decision-making and planning** to whether it has been considered). This is for three principal reasons.

Firstly, we are concerned here with *infrastructure*. The indicators suggested above are intended to give an idea of whether an organisation has the necessary systems and procedures in place to support its use of ICT, regardless of the purposes to which that ICT is put. Once one starts to assess whether those purposes are the correct or best ones, a wide range of different issues emerge, which are outside the scope of this piece of work. For example, an organisation may have made a principled decision to eschew a particular service delivery option based on ICT because of a belief that it would disrupt the personal relationship between its staff or volunteers and its clients. Should a support organisation try to second-guess that decision and mark them down for not using ICT to its full effect?

Secondly, many organisations do not particularly want to be innovative in their use of ICT. They have other priorities. All they demand of their ICT is that it functions with the minimum of fuss to support their activities. Over time these organisations do adopt new technologies and new ways of working, but they do it just by moving with the times and keeping up with other organisations — the adoption of e-mail has happened like that for many organisations — rather than as a conscious strategic objective. There is nothing wrong with this, especially for small and medium-sized organisations, whose capacity for any sort of planning is stretched, and who therefore have to prioritise where they put their efforts. It would be wrong to judge that they were falling short, just because their ICT is commonplace rather than exciting.

The third reason relates to the diversity of the voluntary and community sector. There are serious practical difficulties in coming up with indicators which would serve to provide any kind of comparative assessment of whether organisations were using ICT appropriately in service delivery.

That is not to diminish the importance of considering ICT in service delivery, just to suggest that there has to be a limit to how much ground one single programme of work can cover.

3. Baseline research

Questionnaires were sent by post to around 2,500 organisations and made available electronically through the Consortium web site. Some 6,000 organisations were notified of this by e-mail. A total of 960 valid responses were received, 434 by post and 526 electronically. (The electronic notification is likely to have gone to a significant number of ineligible organisations, so no conclusions should be drawn about response rates.)

The respondents were from a pleasingly diverse range of organisations. There was no obvious pattern in either the size of the organisations, the extent of their coverage, or their target group. From this point of view, the respondents form a very useful sample of the voluntary and community sector. However, it would be unwise to extrapolate from the data to the sector as a whole without adjusting for the fact that smaller and more local organisations, for example, are under-represented in the sample.

The UK Voluntary Sector Almanac, NCVO, 2004 gives estimated numbers for general charities of different sizes in the UK in 2002. Even though our survey looks only at England, and includes some voluntary and community organisations that are not charities, the figures in the almanac give a good idea of the population our sample is drawn from. The approximate proportions are:

Very small Under £10,000	Small £10,000 – £100,000	Medium-sized £100,000 – £1,000,000	Large Over £1,000,000
National population (just over 150,000 organisations)			
59%	29%	10%	2%
ICT Consortium survey (no data on 4% of respondents)			
6%	25%	48%	17%

In the discussion that follows, it must therefore be remembered that although the very small organisations form a very small proportion of respondents to the survey, they actually represent over half of all voluntary and community organisations in the country. (Data on additional very small organisations such as village halls is being collected through a further questionnaire distribution, so that they can be better represented in the final benchmarking and in any follow-up surveys.) Medium-sized organisations, by contrast, are over-represented and large organisations significantly so.

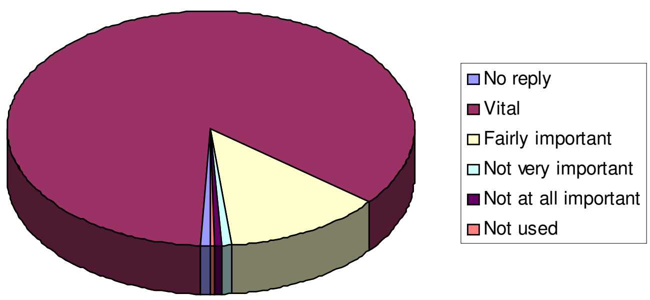
There are considerable differences in response between organisations of different sizes. Many surveys looking at ICT use in the voluntary sector do not break their analysis down by size to any great extent. The effect of this is that comparisons can sometimes be misleading or difficult to make when the proportions of organisations vary between two different surveys.

More information about the respondents' organisations can be found in Appendix D.

Importance of ICT

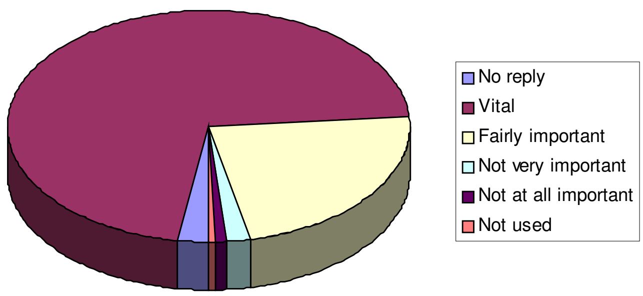
Respondents were self-selected. It is therefore little surprise that the majority of them rate computers as "vital" or "fairly important". What is perhaps surprising is how overwhelming this majority is. Nearly 85% rated computers as "vital", with under 2% saying that they were "not very important", "not at all important" or "not used".[4] There are, undoubtedly, organisations for whom ICT is less important. Our survey supports other research which suggests that these are almost all at the smallest end of the scale: the proportion for whom ICT is "vital" drops to 53% of very small organisations.

Figure 1: How important are computers to your organisation's work?



A similar pattern applies to the internet, although here "vital" accounted for just over 70% and "fairly important" for 23%.

Figure 2: How important is the internet/e-mail to your organisation's work?



We thus have a general picture that, across the board, ICT in general and the internet in particular are recognised as essential tools by today's voluntary and community sector — a finding which is endorsed by large numbers of other research reports.

Given this importance, it is then instructive to examine the hallmarks of effective use, outlined in the evaluation framework above, to see how well they are represented.

[4] All percentages are of the total number of respondents, including those who did not answer that specific question, except where stated.

One would expect the self-selected respondents to this survey to be doing better than average; to this extent, the survey can be taken to represent the current high-water mark of good practice. The question is: is it good enough?

Decision-making and planning

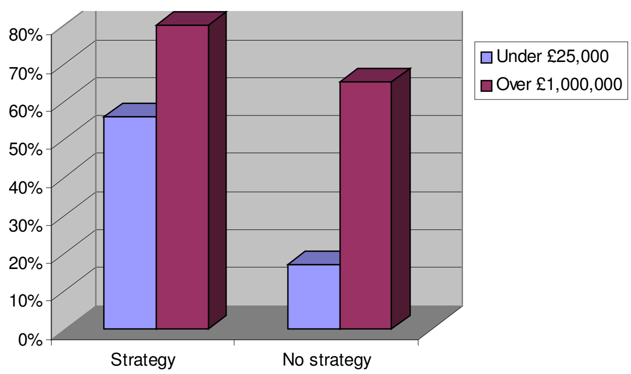
The larger an organisation is, the more likely it is to have an ICT strategy. Nearly 60% of those spending over £1,000,000 have one, compared with just over 10% of those spending less than £25,000, with a regular progression in between. The same pattern is repeated when it comes to having a specific budget for ICT (with figures of just over 80% and just over 20% respectively). All told, one third of respondents said that their organisation has an ICT strategy.

This was reinforced in several qualitative interviews which suggested that the approach to IT planning became more sophisticated as the organisation matured.

> *Our approach to IT has become more organised as all aspects of our operation have become more professionalised. We've grown rapidly in five years and consequently have had to learn fast. We're moving into new premises and are looking at buying in some external advice and support to help sort out our IT setup – that wouldn't have happened even last year.*

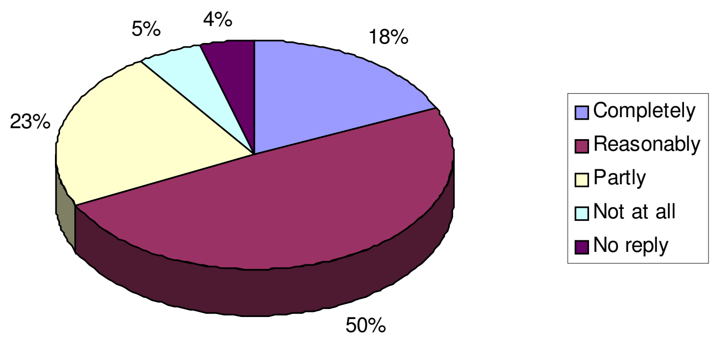
It is unreasonable to expect organisations with fewer resources to operate in the same way as larger ones. Nevertheless, there is a clear link between, for example, having a strategy and investing money. In every category of spending that was asked about, organisations with a strategy — across all sizes — were more likely to have invested in the past year. For example, the chart below compares organisations of two different sizes, with and without a strategy, and asks whether they installed or upgraded their network last year:

Figure 3: Organisations that invested in their network last year



The link is not necessarily one-way — an organisation needing to invest may decide to start by preparing a strategy — but the connection is important, and assistance with preparing strategies should be part of any programme to support ICT investment. In particular it should be noticed that the link is particularly strong for smaller organisations, which are the ones that generally need most help overall.

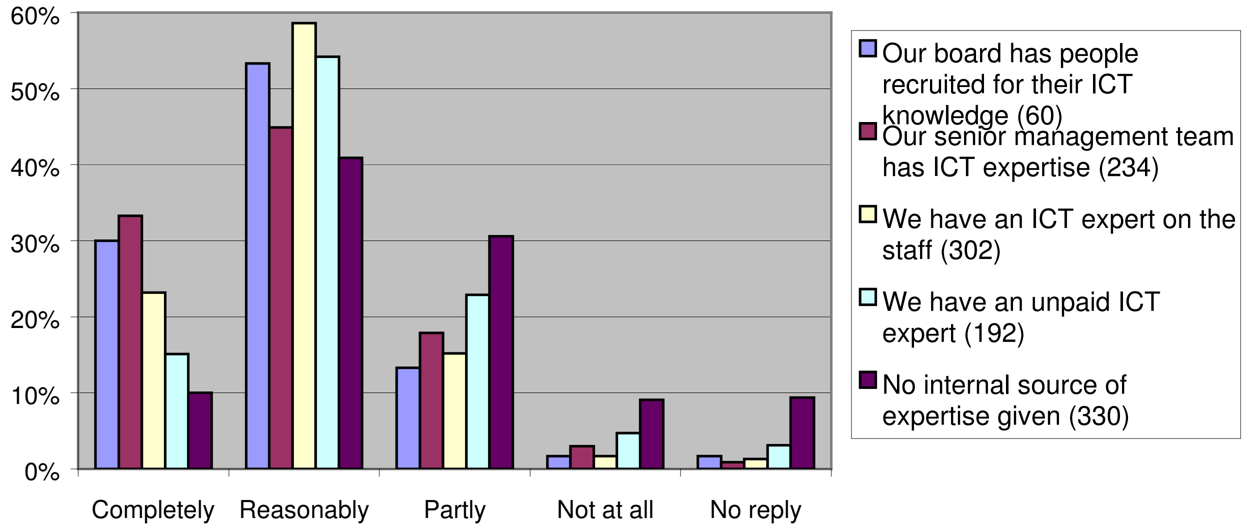
Figure 4: How satisfied are you with ICT decision-making?



Those respondents whose organisation had a strategy were also more likely to be satisfied with their organisation's ICT decision-making and more confident about their own personal ability to make ICT decisions. For example, 77% of those with a strategy are "completely" or "reasonably" satisfied with their organisation's decision-making on ICT, compared to 64% of those without a strategy.

Equally, when those who indicated they are "using IT much more effectively" than two to three years ago were asked in interviews what led to this improvement, overwhelmingly the development of a strategy and/or budget was at the heart. Often this came about as the result of a big upgrade or IT project like network installation.

Figure 5: Satisfaction with ICT decision-making, by internal source of expertise

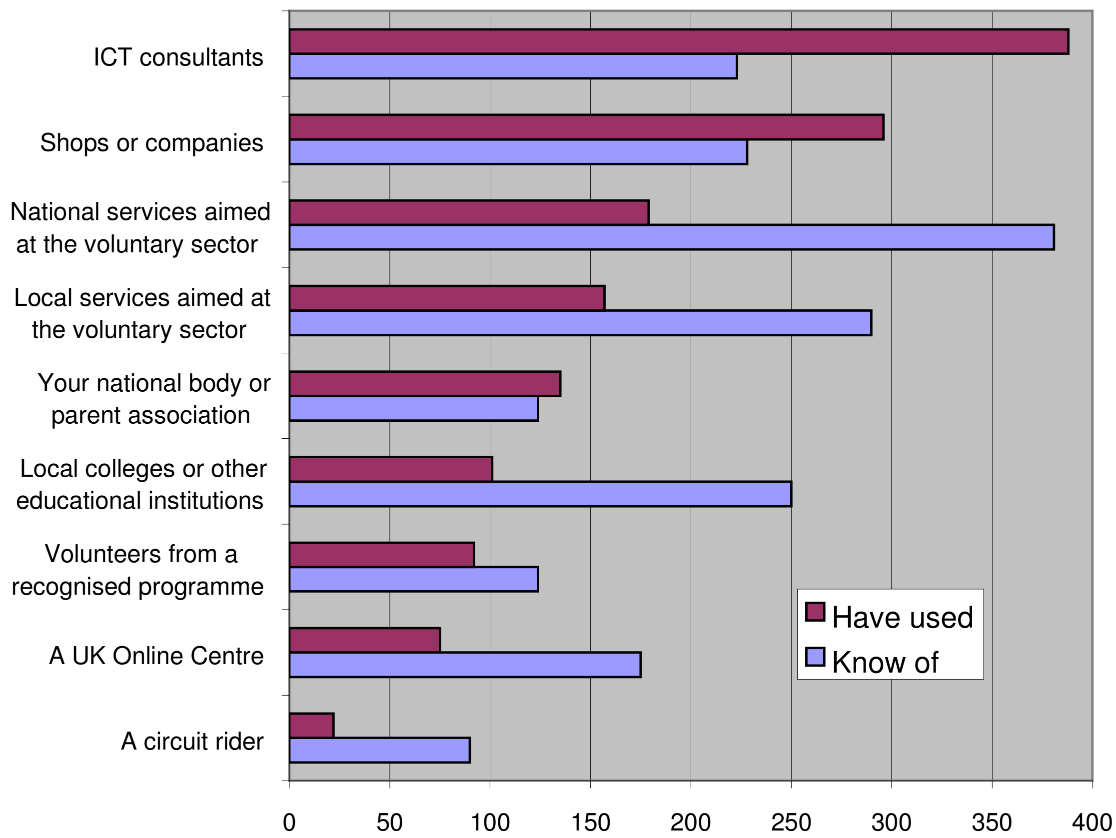


Other factors also affect the quality of an organisation's decision-making on ICT. Many organisations are less than completely satisfied with this, and over a quarter of respondents are only "partly" or "not at all" satisfied with the way ICT decisions are made in their organisation.

When we look at factors related to this, expertise at the top of the organisation is clearly important. Those organisations with expertise on their board or senior management team are more likely to be completely satisfied. Those with an ICT expert on the staff are slightly less satisfied, those with an unpaid ICT expert less still. A third of all respondents mentioned no internal source of expertise at all, and while only 10% of these were "completely" satisfied, half were either "not at all" satisfied or only "partly" satisfied or gave no reply to the question.

As well as looking at internal sources of ICT expertise, the survey looked at external sources of strategic information. Here there are two points of interest: that some sources of information are used more than others, and that some seem to be not used, even if they are known about.

Figure 6: External sources of strategic advice used and known about[5]



This chart shows that the most commonly used external sources of strategic expertise were ICT consultants and shops. These were followed by national and local services aimed at the voluntary sector, and then the respondent organisation's parent body. What is striking, however, is the proportion that know of, but have not used, either

[5] Although it was not strictly intended, respondents seem to have interpreted the options to mean "used" and "know of but not used".

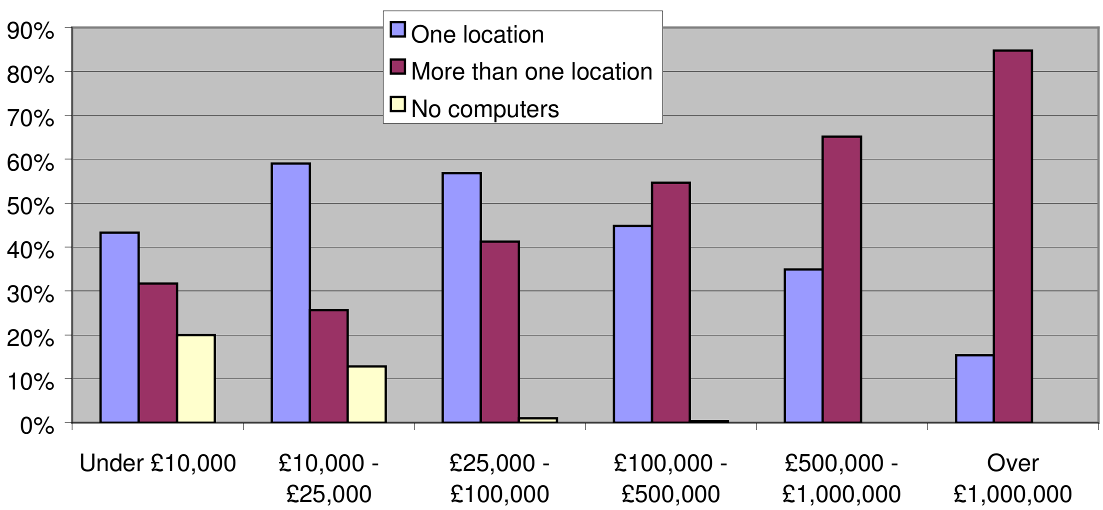
national or local services. This suggests perhaps that the services being offered are unsuitable or inaccessible in some way, or that the service is not trusted. This survey is unable to suggest which of these — or perhaps some other factor — is the main reason, but this question obviously deserves considerable further investigation if future funding is to be put into voluntary-sector specific services, to ensure that they do accurately meet the needs of the intended recipient organisations.[6]

The survey did not specifically examine measures to address inequalities in access to ICT. However, other research has shown, for example, that many voluntary and community sector web sites fall well short of accessibility requirements.

ICT facilities

Only 2% of respondents (virtually all from small or very small organisations) said that they did not have any computers, while a further handful did not answer the question. This leaves over 95% saying that they do have computers, 41% in just one location but 56% in more than one location. This is an often under-appreciated dimension of voluntary and community sector ICT use. While it is true that larger organisations are more likely to have multiple locations, and that they are over-represented in this survey, multiple locations are an important issue for many organisations, even the smallest.

Figure 7: Location of computers by size of organisation



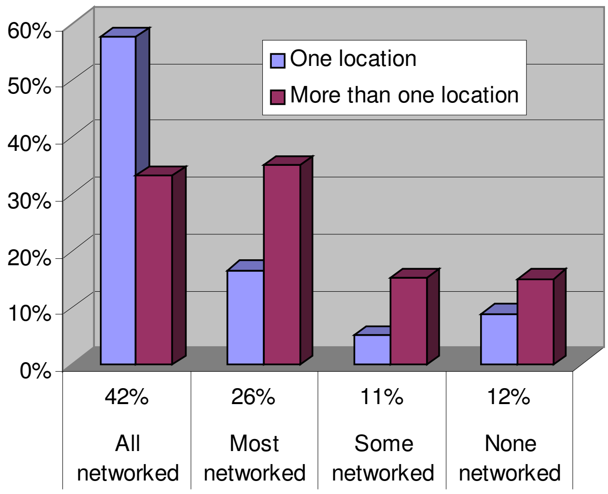
Networking is still a live issue for many organisations, and one where some probably continue to need considerable help. Just over 40% of the respondents reported that all of their organisation's computers are networked. Nearly 40% had a partial network,

[6] Unfortunately, for technical reasons it is not possible fully to analyse the answers to this question by size of organisation or any other cross-tabulation. From the limited analysis possible, however, it does not appear that answers differ much according to the size of the organisation.

while 20% had none, or said that the question did not apply (presumably because they have no computers, or only one).

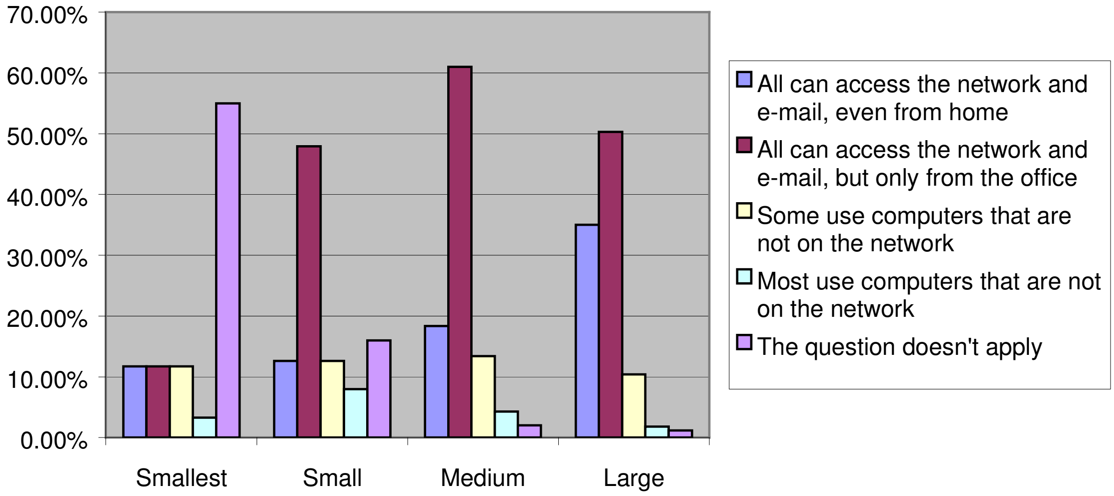
The fact that over half the respondents' organisations have computers in more than one location considerably increases the difficulty of networking them. Where all the computers were in one location nearly twice the proportion had them all linked, and these were much more likely to report also that all of their staff can access the internet — a key reason nowadays for installing a network.

Figure 8: What proportion of computers are networked?



With the amount of business carried out by e-mail still increasing, it is ever more important for all staff — and often key trustees or volunteers as well — to have direct e-mail access. Even in our relatively well-endowed organisations, however, this was by no means the case across the board.

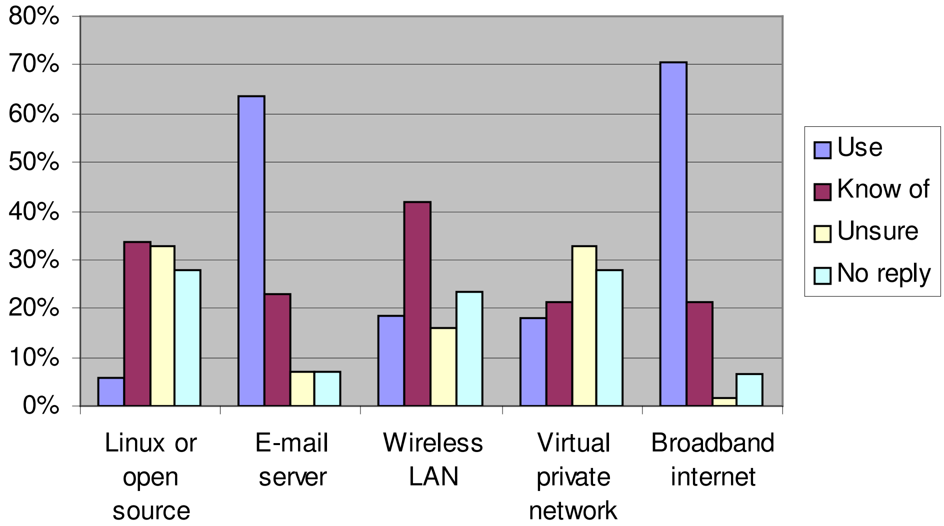
Figure 9: Network access and location, by size of organisation



For the smallest organisations the question about network access was unlikely to be an issue, but for all sizes above that the commonest answer was that everyone in the office is on the network. Large organisations are quite likely to offer access to the network, even to those working from home, but for small and medium-sized organisations this is a rarer option. With the increase in home-working — and now the right to request it — this is an issue that more organisations will have to face in the near future.

Respondents were asked which of a number of specific technologies they either use, know about, or are unsure about. The figures suggest that in some cases (as will be discussed) respondents actually know less than they think about their ICT. The broad pattern of responses, however, is instructive.

Figure 10: Use and knowledge of specific technologies



A very high proportion — 70% — of respondents say they use **broadband** internet access. There is no evidence to suggest that this is an over-estimate, and we must remember that our respondents are generally *au* fait with, and enthusiastic about, ICT. It is also instructive that hardly any respondents either said they were unsure about the technology or didn't answer the question. This therefore does genuinely seem to represent a remarkably fast adoption rate for this technology within the sector, at least among our respondents who appear to represent those at the forefront of ICT developments.

The story is similar with the other technology where high use is reported. The figure of 60% who say they have an **e-mail server** initially looks high. Because the main role of an e-mail server is to provide e-mail access across an organisation, the figure should mirror those who say that all their users have e-mail and internet access, either just within the office or from home as well. And in fact it does; since the total reporting e-mail access across the organisation is actually 72%. The figure saying that all or most of their staff are on the network is also comparable, at 68%. The picture, therefore, is of a well-connected set of organisations — in round figures, two thirds have a network with an e-mail server, and hence good e-mail access for all their staff.

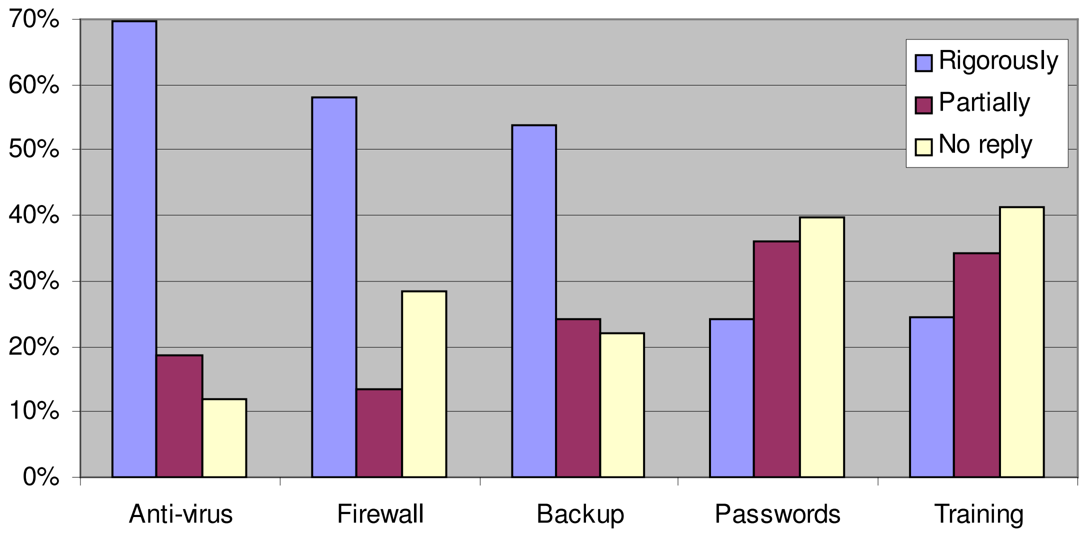
Just under 20% in each case say they use a **wireless network** or a **virtual private network**, but the proportion with knowledge of the former is twice that of the latter. (This is perhaps unsurprising, since a VPN is technically more complex, but it is unfortunate given the previous discussion on the dispersed nature of voluntary and community sector computing, where a VPN can have an important role.) These are both technologies to watch for the future.

At the other end of the scale, just over 5% knowingly use Linux or **open source** software, although a further third know of it. There is a movement to expand the use of open source within the voluntary and community sector, on grounds both of cost, and of "fit" with the mutually supportive ethos of the sector. Follow-up surveys will be able to show whether this has any effect.

One of the big disappointments is the continuing mismatch between the reliance of organisations on ICT and their attention to security. The situation may be improving, but is still unsatisfactory.

Remembering that 85% of respondents rated ICT as "vital" to their organisation's work one would have hoped for more than the 54% who say they carry out a backup routine "rigorously" and the further 24% who do it "partially". Equally, since most security breaches are the result of "social engineering" rather than technical intrusion, there is scope for increasing the proportion who train their staff in security from the current 24% who do it "rigorously" and 34% who do it partially.

Figure 11: Application of security measures



Even with anti-virus precautions there is some way to go. Despite the publicity about the dangers, and actual experience of problems in many organisations, only 70% carry out "rigorous" anti-virus precautions and under 20% "partial". Firewalls should be in place for anyone with a **broadband** internet connection, and are highly recommended for all other users. If 70% of users have broadband, a figure of under 60% implementing a firewall rigorously means that some organisations are exposed to unnecessary and preventable risk. Here, too, some organisations therefore need to make more progress.

Finally, "social engineering" is often presented as the main security threat. There is scope for a considerable increase in training to help staff resist being tricked into a security breach, either electronically or by more traditional means.

ICT administration, support and training

Computers are not trouble-free. Over two thirds of respondents gave examples of recent topics on which they had needed external advice or technical support. These covered a wide range, but many were to do with networking, connecting to the internet and coping with (or forestalling) security problems.

Interviews revealed the extent of reliance on voluntary support. Several indicated that they depend on a volunteer for most network and computer issues. While they were all grateful and full of praise, there was a great sense of concern and vulnerability. *"We're totally reliant on our volunteer — he's wonderful — he comes in once a week to sort out all our network issues. We'd be really stuck if he left because we've looked at commercial options and we just can't afford it."*

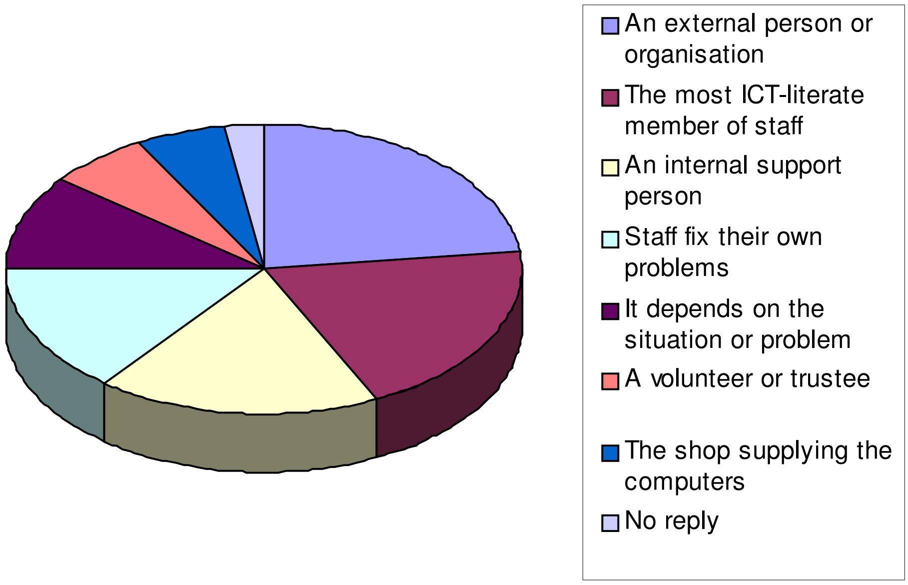
The baseline survey did not directly address the question of what kinds of support and training organisations need, but they have been covered in detail in other research, and many aspects of support have been built into the Consortium's business plan.

What was asked was where the respondents' organisations currently get their technical support. Here there is a mixture of formal and informal arrangements. The most common response was that technical support is provided by an external person or organisation. Third highest was an internal support person. These would both be classed as "formal" support arrangements. Two informal arrangements also ranked highly: "the most ICT-literate member of staff" — a position often referred to as the "accidental techie" — and "staff fix their own problems", which is perhaps acceptable as part of a strategy involving formal support, but is not satisfactory if it is the only or main source of support.

Respondents could select more than one option, and among the more interesting correlations are that:

- Where there is an internal support person, over a third also use external support.
- Where support is carried out by the most ICT-literate person, nearly half also use external support, but nearly two thirds say that staff fix their own problems.
- Relatively few of those using a volunteer or trustee use any other sources of support, although nearly a third do mention the most ICT-literate staff member.

Figure 12: Sources of technical support



This suggests a picture where some organisations have well thought out support systems, involving internal support, external support, or both, while others get along with less formal systems where staff may end up fixing their own problems.

The table overleaf gives the same data. The percentages represent the proportion of those using the source of support at the head of the column who also use the source listed at the left of that row.

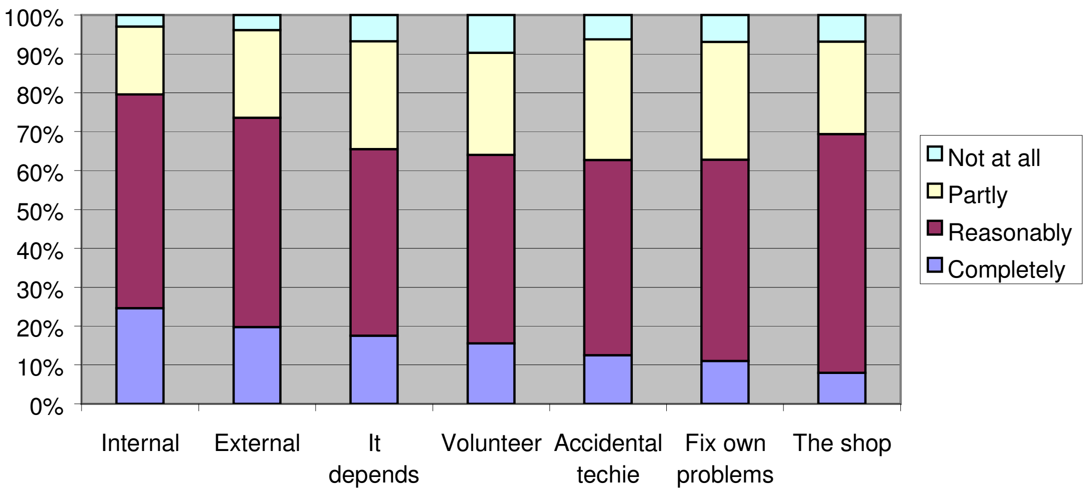
When respondents' sources of support are compared with their views on how well things are going, some interesting patterns emerge. Comparing the source of support with how satisfied they are with the way decisions are made in their organisation, we see that those with formal support arrangements — even though these strictly cover technical support rather than advice — are two or three times as likely to be completely happy with the way decisions are made, compared with those getting support from the shop or leaving staff to fix their own problems, with or without the support of an "accidental techie".

A similar pattern emerges when respondents are asked whether they are using ICT more effectively now than two or three years ago. Here, those who get their support from volunteers or leave it to circumstance are only two thirds as likely to say that they are now using ICT much more effectively, compared with those who have formal internal or external sources of support.

This suggests strongly that advice and support have to be seen as part of a package, and that formal arrangements, either with an internal or an external source of expertise, are an essential part of enabling organisations to use ICT effectively.

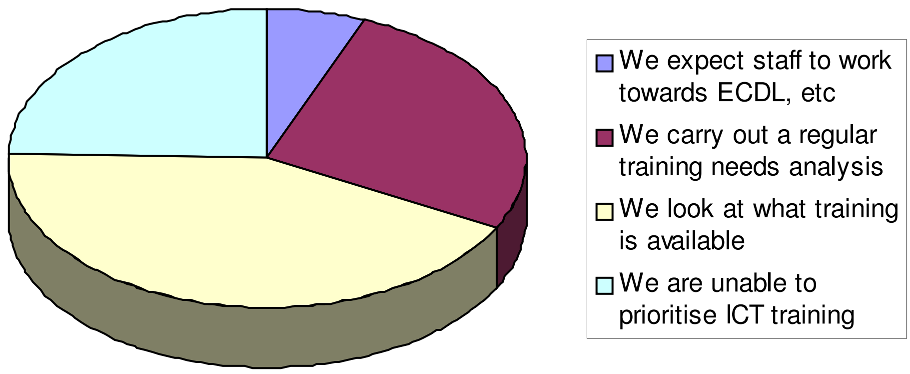
Combinations of support sources								
	Total	The shop	External support	Internal support	Most literate staff	Staff fix own	Volun-teer or trustee	Depends on situation
	960	92	396	307	338	246	109	182
The shop supplying computers	10%		6%	5%	12%	11%	16%	8%
An external person or organisation	41%	24%		37%	42%	44%	17%	19%
An internal support person	32%	17%	29%		10%	11%	6%	10%
The most ICT-literate member of staff	35%	45%	36%	11%		86%	31%	29%
Staff fix their own problems	26%	3%	28%	9%	63%		18%	18%
A volunteer or trustee	11%	19%	5%	2%	10%	8%		12%
It depends on the situation	19%	16%	9%	6%	15%	13%	19%	
No reply	5%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Figure 13: Satisfaction with how decision are made, by source of support



The final topic in this area was training. While about a third of respondents have a formal policy, either built around recognised standards such as the **European Computer Driving Licence** or a training needs analysis, the remainder either take an *ad hoc* approach or, in nearly a quarter of cases, say that they cannot prioritise ICT training. Given that we have already established that our self-selected respondents are probably leaders in the sector, this is disappointing, and should obviously be addressed in future work.

Figure 14: Approach to training



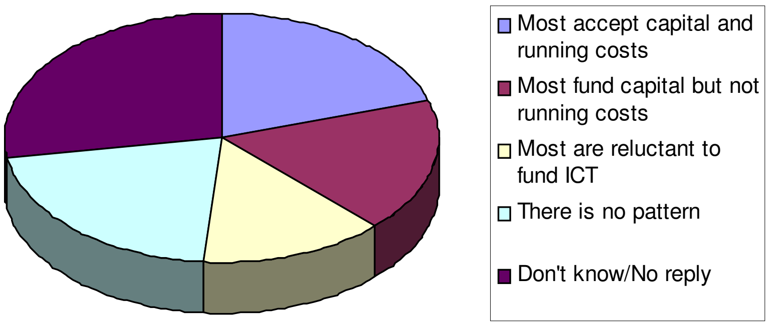
Since the Consortium has as one of its aims to encourage the development of commercially provided software and services to the sector, respondents were asked to identify any products they would like to see. About a third gave suggestions, many in the area of financial management and fundraising, but covering a variety of other topics. This data will be made available to the Consortium for its future work.

Funders' sympathy to ICT

A key aim of the Consortium is to improve funders' responsiveness to ICT needs, in line with the government's recognition of its importance. The Consortium intends to prepare a guide and run a series of seminars which will make recommendations specifically for funders on how to cost ICT. This will suggest that funders should be prepared to support the capital and revenue costs of ICT, through the systematic allocation of these costs to projects.

Only 20% of survey respondents said that their funders were generally happy to accept both capital and running costs for ICT. A similar proportion said that there was no pattern, while slightly fewer said that they could get funding for capital but not running costs or that their funders are reluctant to support ICT at all.

Figure 15: Funders' attitudes to ICT

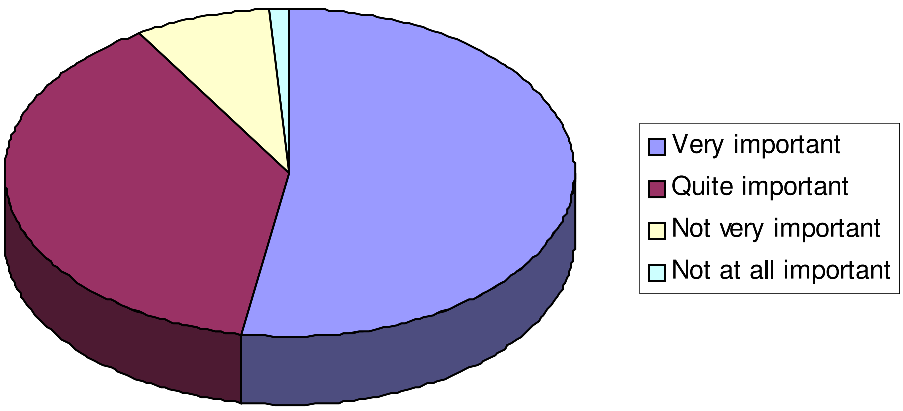


This shows a very mixed pattern, therefore, with some good practice and some less good. About 17% of respondents gave further comments on their funders' attitudes.

The role of support agencies

Despite the reluctance to use existing ICT advice services from local and national agencies, discussed above, there was nevertheless substantial support for the idea that voluntary and community sector support agencies should provide advice on ICT. Just over half the respondents felt that this is very important, with a further third or more feeling it to be quite important.

Figure 16: Role of support agencies in providing ICT advice and support

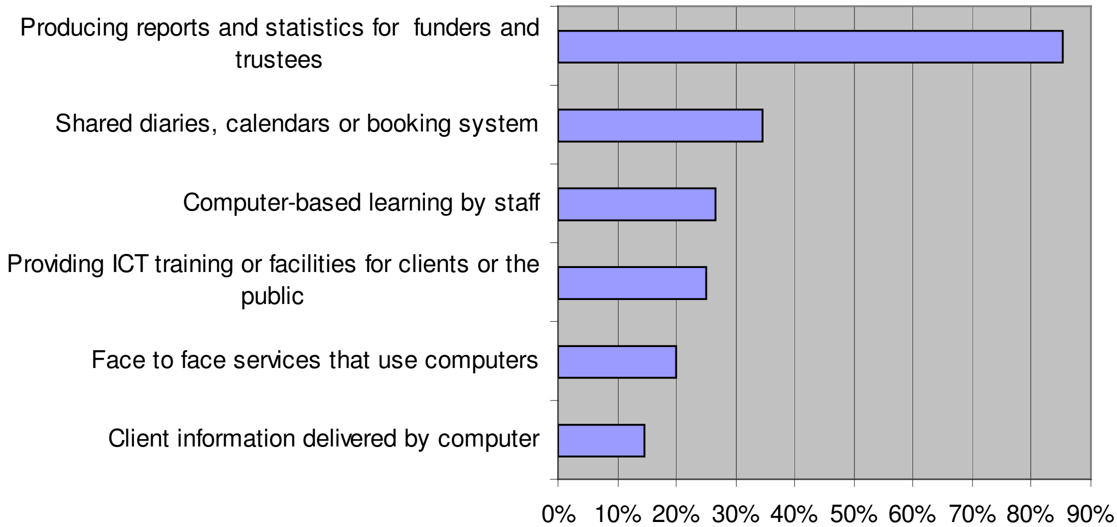


Use of ICT in service delivery

Although the use of ICT in service delivery is important, this piece of work did not look at it in detail, because it had been judged not to be a relevant part of the evaluation criteria (see Section 2, above).

A few aspects of this were explored, however. Internal uses of ICT, for things like producing reports to funders far outweigh the use with clients. About a quarter of respondents, however, do provide ICT training or facilities, and smaller proportions offer face to face services that use computers, or deliver client information by computer.

Figure 17: Selected uses of ICT

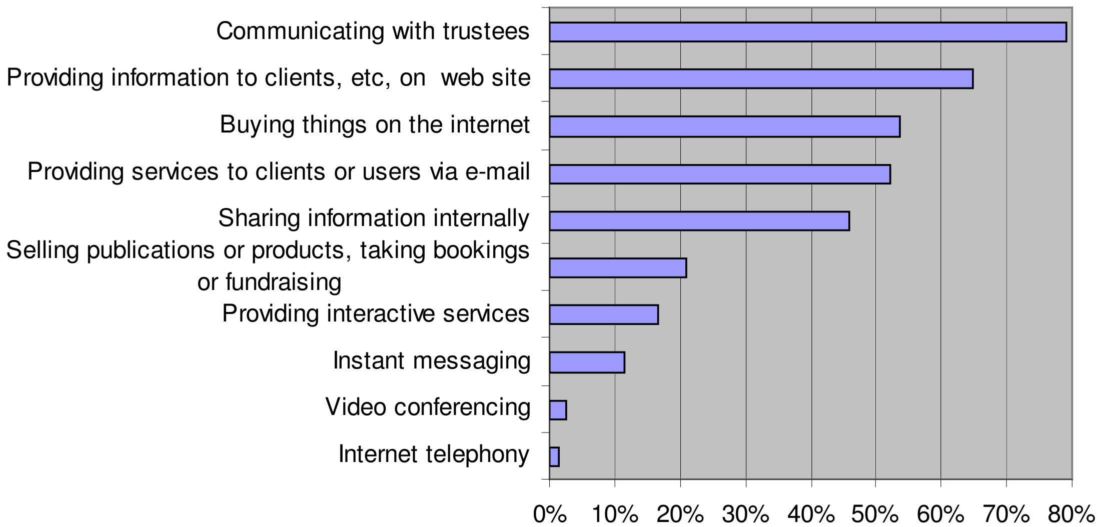


When the question is posed in terms of electronic service delivery on the organisation's web site, a more active picture emerges. While internal uses such as communicating with trustees, and making purchases still come at or near the top of the list, information for clients is available on the web sites of two thirds of respondent organisations, and just over half provide services to clients by e-mail. Interactive services, however, even for our relatively sophisticated respondents, still have to take off. (See figure overleaf.)

The web is important for our respondents. Neraly three quarters have a web site, while a handful (6%) have a presence on a parent body's site or community site. Of the remainder, only a quarter (under 5% of the total sample) have no plans at all for a web presence.

Among the respondents who gave a web site address almost all had a domain name that was recognisably related to their organisation's name. It would appear that, at least among the technically aware part of the voluntary and community sector, the use of ISP-related domain names has almost been eliminated. This is a crucial first step in delivering more client services electronically, because it gives a much more professional image, and suggests that for many organisations the infrastructure is starting to become available, as a basis from which interactive electronic services can now start to be delivered.

Figure 18: Uses of e-mail and the internet



4. Literature review

ICT in the voluntary sector has been the subject of much research and discussion in the past five years. Between 2000 and 2002, several seminal reports attempted to measure and analyse the use of ICT in the UK voluntary and community sectors. *E-enabling the Voluntary & Community Sector* (Hall Aitken), *Leading the Way to ICT Success* (Ticher), and *Virtual Promise* (Future Foundation) all outlined the potential benefits of ICT to the sector, yet found that the level of technology infrastructure was generally insufficient, preventing many of these gains being realised.

Hall Aitken firmly concluded that the more the sector is e-enabled, the greater would be its capacity to deliver effective services, particularly to the hardest to reach groups. *Virtual Promise* echoed these arguments by asserting that the internet in particular will increasingly "give competitive advantage to those charities that use it well, allowing them to deliver more benefits, reduce costs and reach new audiences". Yet, despite these widely acknowledged benefits, this early research indicated that voluntary and community groups were lagging behind the private and public sectors in adopting and capitalising on ICT.

Computer/staff ratios, networking and internet connectivity are often cited as indicators for ICT maturity. In 2001, Hall Aitken found that although 82% of VCS organisations claimed to own computers, this masked the fact that their computers were generally of limited capacity and represented a low ratio of machines to users. Only 28% of those surveyed had or planned to have a network compared to 74% of UK businesses; and only 78% of those surveyed expected to have an internet connection compared to 94% of businesses. Equally the Future Foundation concluded in 2000, that although the majority of the 150 largest charities had an online presence, the usage and functionality of these websites was quite basic, with limited impact.

In analysing this technology gap, the early research indicated that there were significant barriers preventing the voluntary sector from fully experiencing the efficiency and service delivery benefits of ICT. Lack of resources both for an initial investment in technology and ongoing costs was often cited as a major obstacle.

While acknowledging that resourcing is clearly a critical issue, Ticher suggested that the biggest barriers to effective use of ICT were internal. In *Leading the Way*, he argued that managerial vision and confidence could overcome funding obstacles, and that ICT awareness should be part of every manager's repertoire. This has remained a dominant theme in all subsequent studies, where a shift in attitude and awareness is seen as a precursor to improvements in the effective use of ICT.

The publication of these reports elevated the issue on the agenda of policymakers and sector representatives. In the Government's Cross Cutting Review (CCR) of the Role of the VCS in Service Delivery, 2002, ICT was identified as an area of "considerable weakness", primarily due to lack of appropriate support and resources. The report stated that increased capacity in this area was required for the voluntary and community sector to realise its full potential, and recommended that the Active

Communities Unit (ACU) be given the task of coordinating the development of a coherent strategy to address the issue.

Working with the ACU, the ICT Consortium published its ICT infrastructure strategy in late 2003, much of which was embraced in the subsequent publication of the government's Capacity Building Infrastructure Framework – ChangeUp (June 2004). In this document, ICT is further highlighted as a priority issue with high level objectives set for improvement over the next 10 years.

As a result of these developments, numerous local and regional studies have been undertaken in the past year to map ICT use and requirements, primarily with a view to exploring the feasibility of setting-up local ICT support services. These studies contain detailed information about the current ICT situation in many parts of the country. Several of these studies are reviewed here in order to gauge the level of change since earlier research, and to augment the findings of this national benchmarking exercise.

While each study must, of course, address issues specific to its area and the brief of the researchers, there are some topics have been addressed by a number of surveys. It is interesting to see how consistent many of the results are across the country. A table of selected comparisons can be found in Appendix F.

Several key themes emerge from these local surveys[7].

Access is up but there are still barriers

Firstly, there is significant evidence that on the surface things have improved since Hall Aitken. Levels of ownership are up, computer-staff ratios are up, and a majority of organisations have embraced networking and the internet.

Many studies suggest an increasing dependence on ICT where "one computer per desk" is becoming a reality (at least for office based organisations). For example, researchers in Merseyside report that computer staff ratios are 1:1.8, and that 82% of organisations surveyed have some form of internet connectivity. This is consistent with other studies, which also indicate that between 50% and 80% of organisations have an internal network, a vast increase on the Hall Aitken baseline of 28% in 2001. Recent data from Virtual Promise also suggests a 25% increase in the number of small groups with an online presence since 2000.

However, several researchers conclude that these figures mask the real issue, and that underlying these positive developments there is still cause for concern. Some make the point that in reality, although overall adoption has increased, many organisations are struggling to work with outdated and disparate computer equipment. (Hampshire, Northamptonshire, Herefordshire & Worcestershire).

---

[7] See the references in Appendix B. Studies are referred to here by county.

There is a lack of technical support for systems, with several studies revealing that up to 70% of organisations rely on ad-hoc, informal and unskilled support and maintenance — particularly amongst small and small groups. Therefore, as researchers in Oxford put it, it seems a paradox has emerged in which voluntary organisations are now making greater use of ICT, yet doing so without the underlying resources to manage their investments effectively.

There are several examples in the research which illustrate this point. A recurring theme is the reliance of voluntary and community groups on friends, volunteers and "accidental techies" for advice and support. While apparently cost-effective, this approach has two significant downsides according to the research.

Firstly, the organisation can be left extremely exposed when this support is removed. According to Hampshire, "the departure of a single skilled person can plunge the organisation into an IT black-hole". The research suggests this is particularly problematic with the development of web sites and databases by external contacts, when systems are left with nobody in the organisation skilled enough to maintain them. (Northamptonshire)

The second problem with this type of support is that it engenders a "reactive" approach to IT — addressing issues only as and when a problem arises, or when there is someone available to help out.

This is reinforced by the findings on security. Almost all of the studies reveal an inconsistent approach to virus protection and firewalls. Several researchers cite security as a major indicator of ICT fitness. Yet Hampshire found that as many as 40% of organisations were not taking adequate security precautions, leaving their hard-won IT investments unprotected. This echoes findings of Herefordshire & Worcestershire and Northamptonshire which found that 50% and 30% respectively were unprotected. Given the increasing reliance on ICT, this poses a real concern.

So why is the voluntary sector still struggling with IT? There are mixed opinions amongst the research. Some point to funding and lack of financial resources as the major obstacle. Evidence indicates that costs for one-off investments are becoming less of a difficulty, particularly as relative capital costs of ICT are decreasing. A consistent point made in the research is that funders are biased to capital payments, resulting in new PCs being written into funding bids for projects. However, rarely does this cover the ongoing costs of supporting the equipment. Almost all of the research concludes that it is the "total cost of ownership" — the ongoing maintenance, training and support costs — that present a major challenge for voluntary and community organisations.

While acknowledging that cost is clearly an obstacle, some researchers argue that lack of money is only part of the picture. With the right mindset, even small and inexpensive changes can significantly improve the effectiveness of available resources. However, low expectations and limited awareness of ICT potential can prevent organisations thinking in this way. According to researchers in Hampshire, part of the problem is that the sector is used to "making do" and therefore isn't very ambitious about ICT.

> *"Because people get used to making the best of a bad deal, they often take the view that 'if they're getting by', why should they pay for additional training, support or development."*

Unfortunately, the researchers argue, with ICT this is simply not cost-effective. Unplanned and poorly supported regimes require a disproportionate amount of time and money on "fire-fighting" rather than developing internal ICT capacity. (Merseyside). This is reinforced by findings in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, and in Yorkshire where both studies revealed that although 90% of organisations using ICT considered it 'vital', few have written IT strategies, defined budgets, or other essential policies and procedures. Without these key ingredients, organisations are unable to prioritise expenditure or use ICT to its full effectiveness.

However, Ticher is keen to point out that this is not necessarily their fault.

> *"An organisation that is fully engaged in delivering a service with over-stretched resources may not be in a position to take the risks that frequent ICT initiatives demand. This fundamental constraint should be borne in mind, and a 'safety first' strategy may be appropriate for many organisations."*

Size matters

Despite the implication that voluntary and community organisations are struggling with ICT, several researchers make the point that the situation cannot be generalised. A few studies (Herefordshire & Worcestershire, Oxfordshire) specifically analysed their findings by the size of organisation with important conclusions. From this more detailed analysis, it appears that the issues outlined above primarily apply to small and medium sized groups, and that the problems they encounter are similar to any under-resourced small to medium sized business. Although there are some unique aspects (including funding structures) many of the issues stem from lack of time, problems with growing organisational structures, and lack of general understanding about how prioritising ICT can relieve some of the financial and time pressure in the long term (Northamptonshire).

A typical pattern of development has emerged. Often the needs of the very small organisation are commensurate with their ICT resources: they may require only very basic or no ICT. However, as staff are employed and the number of staff increases, the complexity of ICT requirements tends to increase dramatically (Merseyside). Often the ICT infrastructure does not keep up. This echoes initial findings by Hall Aitken that medium-sized organisations have the lowest computer and connectivity ratios. Once an organisation becomes quite large and assumes a more organised, managerial approach to all aspects of its operation, it becomes more likely that ICT will be effectively embedded into the organisation.

This is borne out by other evidence which suggests that on the whole, bigger organisations in the sector are doing very well with regard to ICT. The research certainly concluded that the larger organisations are more likely to have strategies, budgets and policies, and generally to be more satisfied with their ICT. Equally, significant changes in approach to training and support appear as an organisation gets bigger. A survey by *Charity Finance* magazine[8] found that voluntary and community organisations with up to 25 employees spend about 40% of their ICT budget on maintenance and 10% on training, whereas organisations with 100 – 500 staff spend approximately 28% on maintenance and 20% on training.

Another useful indicator is how the sector is perceived by outsiders. *Third Sector*[9] offers several quotes from senior executives in the ICT industry praising the ICT efforts of the large organisations. According to David Smith (UK & Ireland Marketing Manager for Hewlett Packard) *"the majority of charity people I deal with have done a really good job on research, and are often more pragmatic and results-oriented than equivalents in similar sized organisations in the commercial sector".*

Therefore, there seems to be a period in an organisation's mid-development where the gap between ICT requirements and ICT resources is most problematic and, according to researchers in Merseyside, where they have the most capacity for improvement through ICT. Interestingly, this finding is reinforced by the most recent DTI Annual IT Benchmarking Study (2003) on business ICT use. One of the primary conclusions is that smaller businesses represent the new "digital divide", as they are lagging noticeably behind larger organisations in deploying ICT. According to their research, *"smaller businesses need someone to help them exploit technology, but no one's set up to do it – businesses of less than 50 [staff] are 'falling through the cracks'."*

Models for support

There is clear evidence of an overwhelming need for specialist ICT support, particularly for small and medium-sized groups. In Herefordshire & Worcestershire, 83% of respondents with computers felt that it was "very" or "quite" important for sector support agencies to provide ICT advice and support. According to the research, these support needs are wide ranging and include:

- awareness raising and advice on developing ICT strategically
- training and skills development for staff
- technical support and maintenance for systems

In the effort to address these issues several models of specialist support have emerged over the past couple of years. Some provide technical support on a "social enterprise" basis including, for example, *ENProve IT*, *Community Computer Technicians*, *CapacITy*, and *ESP Projects*. Others, such as *Lasa*, are providing direct support through grant-funded "Circuit rider" schemes where an ICT development worker supports a number of small voluntary organisations in developing their capacity. The

8 Voluntary Sector IT Survey 2004, *Charity Finance*
9 IT Systems: Computer Overhaul, *Third Sector* July 2004

emphasis is usually on providing strategic advice and developing sustainable improvements in groups, as much as on trouble-shooting and day-to-day technical help. Finally, there are examples of community based projects such as *Herefordshire In Touch* and *Superhighways Partnership* which act as "ICT support hubs", providing a range of advice, support and training services to voluntary groups in their area[10].

Lessons so far

While it is early days yet in assessing either the sustainability of these projects or the long-term effects on the groups benefiting from their services, initial results are very encouraging. As mentioned previously, several of the studies referenced here have either assessed the feasibility of establishing specialist ICT support services, or evaluated pilot projects that have provided some aspect of support. There are valuable lessons to be learned from these pioneering projects for others considering similar initiatives.

Three noteworthy themes emerge from the evaluations:

Cost & sustainability

Many of the initial projects relied on grant funding. Since such funding is likely to be time limited this raises questions about long-term sustainability of this approach. Therefore, projects are increasingly looking at a "Social enterprise" model, in which services are paid for by users, albeit at lower rates than commercial suppliers. In most cases, the recommendations for new services acknowledge that a combination of grant funding (particularly for "pump priming" a project) and income generation will be required.

Several make the point that cost is still a real barrier for some organisations. This means that that some form of cross-subsidisation is likely to be necessary to make the service accessible to the poorest organisations, who would struggle to find even a few hundred pounds for a support contract.

Realistic expectations

One of the key issues arising in the pilot projects was the lack of distinction between support and advice amongst participants. While several projects set out to assist with the development of ICT strategies, they found organisations requesting help with more specific technical problems. Evidence suggests that organisations find it difficult to focus on the strategic messages when they have urgent problems to deal with. Therefore it seems essential to clarify the overall objectives, but also to allow some flexibility in which a certain level of trouble-shooting may be required in order to "get the ball rolling".

Equally, it is important to have realistic ambitions about what projects can achieve — particularly those with long-term capacity building objectives. In the Lasa review, although some participants had not been successful in implementing all elements of

[10] Further descriptions of these projects can be found in the North Yorkshire report

an action plan, they all reported increased awareness of ICT planning and management and a sense that the project had been a "catalyst" for change.

Targeted, high value services

Another key message from the reports is that the most successful services are likely to be those that have properly assessed what is required by their target users and don't try to be "all things to all people". In some cases it may be appropriate to concentrate on certain segments where it is believed the most impact can be generated — perhaps to the exclusion of others. Models which are effective in urban centres may be less appropriate in rural areas, and so on.

Conclusion

Clearly there is a growing body of literature and research which holds a wealth of information about how ICT has evolved in the voluntary sector, where we are now, and what the future holds. There appears to be consistency across the country on many findings as is evidenced by the comparative research chart (see Appendix F). In summary, the sector's current use of ICT is growing, adoption levels are high and "the dash for access" is no longer the primary concern. The gap with the private sector is diminishing, and we now face many of the same issues.

However, there are pervasive problems to do with planning and managing ICT resources effectively, particularly for small and medium size organisations. This is especially evidenced by findings on security and support arrangements. There is certainly a role for specialist help, but different sized organisations have different priorities and needs. Therefore the aim should be to provide the appropriate level of support at the right time to help groups progress in a positive direction — benefiting from the experience of others and relying on tried and tested models of development where appropriate.

Innovative support projects are beginning to spring up around the country as a result of the government's Infrastructure Capacity Building programme which will provide invaluable lessons for all. It is hoped that the research findings consolidated here, along with the findings of this benchmarking exercise, will provide key baselines in guiding and evaluating services aimed at improving the ICT capacity of the sector over the next few years..

Details of the reports referenced here and other sources of information can be found in Appendix B.

Appendix A: Glossary

ADSL – Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line, the most common form of **broadband**, which makes its connection over normal telephone lines.

Anti-virus software – software which monitors a computer system for the presence of computer viruses and removes them if possible.

Broadband – any of the various means of connecting a computer to the internet which enables information to be transferred significantly faster than a dial-up connection. The most common means are **ADSL** and cable (i.e. provided along with cable TV), with wireless and satellite less common.

Client-server network – a **network** in which one computer has a special role as the server, storing files and documents, controlling printers and other equipment, collecting and distributing e-mail and providing the single connection to the internet. In larger networks these tasks may be shared among several servers. The computers at which people work are known as clients or **workstations**.

Domain – the part of an internet address which identifies where e-mail should be sent to, or where a web site can be found (in an e-mail address, the part after the "@" sign). Organisations (or individuals) can purchase their own domain name (such as *ncvo-vol.org.uk*), or can be addressed through their **internet service provider**, so that their domain name includes the ISP name.

E-mail server — a piece of software running on the **network** (almost always on the **server**) which collects all the e-mail for a particular **domain** and distributes it among the various users at their **workstations**.

European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) — a basic qualification in the use of a broad range of office ICT applications.

Firewall – a piece of hardware or software used to prevent unauthorised access to a computer or group of computers.

ICT – Information and Communications Technology

Internet – the global network connecting millions of computers. The World Wide Web is part of the internet and e-mail is transmitted over the internet

Internet Service Provider – a company which provides the means of accessing the internet and transmitting e-mail, and usually offers related services, such as "hosting" an organisation's web site and domain name.

ISP – see **internet Service Provider**

Network – an interconnected system of computers which are attached to each other by physical cable or by **wireless** connection. Networks enable users to share information more easily and to share resources such as printers and internet connections.

Online – a term that has commonly come to mean "connected to the **internet**". It is also used to refer to materials stored on a computer (such as an on-line newsletter) or to a device like a printer that is ready to accept commands from a computer.

Open source – any software whose code is available for users to look at and modify freely. Linux is the best-known example; others include Apache, the dominant software for servers that provide access to web sites.

Virtual Private Network (VPN) – a hardware and software arrangement used to connect two or more computers or systems securely via an **internet** connection.

Can be used to allow home workers to dial into the office system and use it as though they were in the office.

Web site – a collection of web pages (documents) available via the internet. A web site is a means of electronic publishing, allowing individuals and organisations to share resources and information irrespective of geographical location and technical knowledge. Web sites are attached to 'domain names' which provides the electronic address of the site, for example www.itshere.org.uk

Wireless network – a network connection without physical cabling, normally using short-range radio.

Workstation – may be used to describe client computers in a **client-server network**.

Appendix B: References

Early national research

The following citations refer to national research surveys examining the use and effectiveness of ICT in the UK voluntary and community sector.

Future Foundation, **Virtual Promise: Are charities making the most of the internet revolution?** 2000.

Active Community Unit, **E-enabling the Voluntary & Community Sectors**, Nov 2001.

Baring Foundation & WCIT, **Leading the Way to ICT Success**, March 2002.

NCVO, **NCVO Report on IT in the Voluntary Sector**, Nov 2002.

VSNTO, **Future Skills**, 2003.

Government infrastructure reports

Following are the various government reports which have highlighted and addressed the need for improvements in ICT capacity in the sector as part of overall infrastructure development.

HM Treasury**, The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery: A Cross Cutting Review,** September 2002

ACU-Home Office, **Voluntary & Community Infrastructure – A consultation document,** September 2003.

ACU-Home Office , **Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Final Report**, March 2004.

ACU-Home Office **, ChangeUp - Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector**, 2004.

Local ICT mapping & feasibility studies

Following is a list of research recently conducted as a result of the government's proposals to improve ICT capacity of the voluntary and community sector. The studies have been carried out at local and sub-regional level, and are generally of two types. Several have undertaken ICT mapping with a view to assessing the feasibility for the development of specialist support services. A few others have evaluated pilot support service projects to assess future development.

Northamptonshire: Evaluation Report of ICT Support Service for Voluntary Groups in Rural Areas, CVS Northamptonshire/ACRE, March 2004.

Hampshire ICT Project, Winchester Area Community Action, May 2004.

Survey of ICT in the VCS in Merseyside (Chris Lovell) June 2004.

Proposals for development of ICT services for Greater London VCS, LASA, June 2004.

Hereford & Worcester Voluntary & Community Sector ICT Research, Hereford In Touch, July 2004.

Is Derbyshire Doing IT?, High Peaks CVS, July 2004.

Voluntary & Community Sector ICT: Resources & Needs, Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action, August 2004.

The Development of ICT Support Services for Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations in Nottinghamshire, Nottinghamshire Rural Community Council, August 2004.

LASA Circuit Rider Project Evaluation, LASA, August 2004.

ITSNY - An IT Support Service for North Yorkshire, North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Originations (NYFVO) September 2004.

Other references

DTI, **Business in the Information Age: The International Benchmarking Study 2003.**

nfpSynergy**, Touch & Go -New Technology Briefing**, (Joe Saxton) July 2004.

Flood, G, **IT Systems: Computer Overhaul**, *Third Sector* July 2004

Allsop, I, **Voluntary Sector IT Survey 2004**, *Charity Finance*, 2004.

Appendix C: Methodology

This report was commissioned in June 2004. The baseline survey was started first, in order to allow time for responses. Once the questionnaires had been sent out, the qualitative research and literature review were undertaken, followed by analysis of the survey responses.

Research

Potential respondents were identified from the contact lists of most of the Consortium members. Where an e-mail address was available, this was used in preference. This resulted in an initial list of around 3,000 organisations for whom an e-mail address was not available, and who therefore needed to receive a postal questionnaire.

The size of the questionnaire was deliberately restricted to four printed pages, in order to encourage the maximum response, and a freepost envelope was also included in the mailing. In order to keep the length down, key questions were identified and closely related ones omitted (for example, because organisations were asked their budget, no question on staffing levels was asked). Owing to the very restricted time scale, it was not possible to pilot the questionnaire.

After weeding out organisations which were not voluntary or not in England, and therefore outside the Consortium's remit, some 2,500 questionnaires were sent out in mid-July 2004, with a reply date of mid-August. Because of postal delays, replies received up to the end of August were accepted.

Meanwhile a virtually identical questionnaire (but with some differences to accommodate technical requirements) was put on the ICT Consortium web site, using the NCVO on-line consultation tool. Alongside this was the facility to download and print off a paper version of the questionnaire, which could then be returned to the freepost address.

About 6,000 potential respondents were notified about the questionnaire by e-mail. Because of the greater difficulty in identifying ineligible organisations on the e-mail lists, it is likely that some of these were inadvertently sent the notification.

All told, 434 responses were received on paper (including those downloaded and printed off) and 526 electronically, making a total of 960.

Technical disparities between the software tool used for analysing the paper questionnaires and the format in which the on-line data was presented meant that a few questions could not be amalgamated in order to permit cross-tabluation. (Questions 13, 28 and 29 — see questionnaire in Appendix

Several dozen potential telephone interviewees were identified from responses, on the basis that they appeared to have recently made significant ICT investments, and it was felt useful to explore in more detail how they had gone about this. Despite the difficulty of getting hold of the appropriate people over the holiday period about a dozen interviews were carried out, and these — together with comments made spontaneously on the questionnaires — have added context to many of the findings.

Literature review

Relevant studies were identified both through a general literature search and through knowledge gleaned from a variety of sources about projects funded at a local level to carry out similar surveys to this one.

This resulted in a table of several dozen pieces of work. In some cases the reports were unavailable owing to commercial confidentiality. In others, the research was being carried on in parallel with this survey, and therefore the results were not available at the time of writing. In retrospect, it would have been enormously helpful if this report could have been delayed by a month in order to take fully into account the vast amount of valuable findings being produced all around the country.

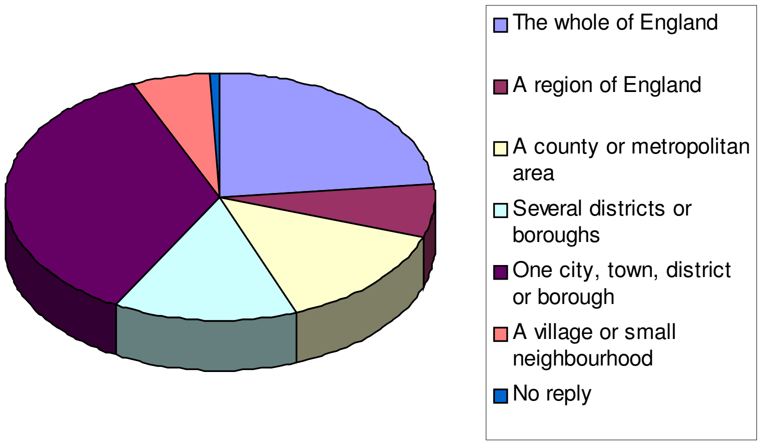
Nevertheless, some researchers were able to provide pre-publication copies of their findings, and these have been incorporated as far as possible.

Appendix D: Profile of respondents' organisations

In the analysis in Section 3, responses are generally divided by size of organisation. This Appendix gives more details of the respondents' organisations.

Not only did the respondents vary in size; they also varied in the geographical area over which they have activities, with the most common being a single town or the whole of England.

Figure 19: Area served by respondent's organisation



Unsurprisingly, those serving mixed areas were more likely to work across the whole of England[11], while those serving specifically rural or urban areas were more likely to work in one specific area. Altogether, organisations working in rural areas made up just under 10% of respondents; those in urban areas 41% and those in mixed areas roughly half.

Area covered, by type of area					
	All	Rural	Urban	Mixed	No reply
Totals	960	95	397	457	11
The whole of England	23%	5%	7%	42%	18%
A region of England	7%	5%	5%	9%	0%
A county or metropolitan area	14%	19%	13%	13%	0%
Several districts or boroughs	14%	16%	16%	12%	0%
One city, town, district or borough	35%	41%	49%	22%	9%
A village or small neighbourhood	6%	14%	9%	1%	0%
No reply	1%	0%	0%	0%	73%

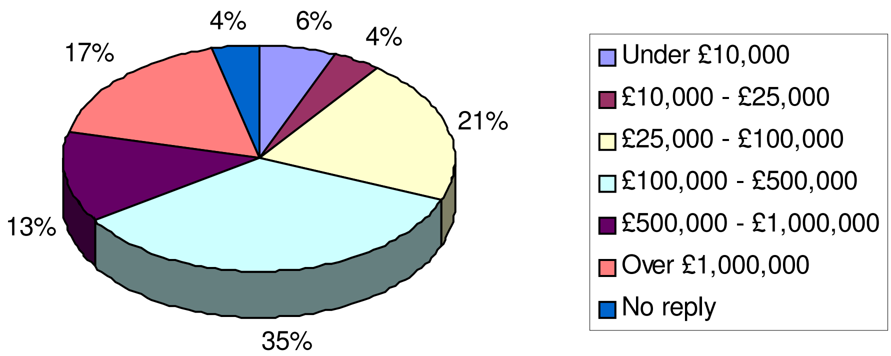
In terms of working with specific target groups, most of the organisations responding to the survey say that they do not work exclusively with either of the groups about which a question was asked — disabled people and black people or people from minority ethnic communities. Many, however, do report that they work with these groups to some extent (see table overleaf).

11 The survey was restricted to organisations in England because of the brief of the sponsoring organisations.

Work with specific target groups				
	Main role	To some extent	Not specifically	No reply
Disabled people, or the groups that represent them	21%	28%	49%	2%
Black people or people from minority ethnic communities, or the groups that represent them	7%	32%	59%	1%

Although the respondents have been grouped by size for the analysis, the full pattern of sizes was as shown below.

Figure 20: Size of respondents' organisations



Appendix E: Questionnaire

The questionnaire appears at this point in the printed version of the report. In order to reduce the size of the web download, please download the questionnaire separately. It is still available on this site.

Appendix F: Comparative findings on selected issues

	Baseline	HallAitken	Derbyshire	Hampshire	Heref. & Worcs	Merseyside	Oxford	Northamptonshire
Survey description	National survey with 960 responses from range of VCS (Jul-Aug04)	National telephone survey of 1400 VCS; email survey of 460 orgs. (2001)	22 Interviews with vol & comm. Sector infrastructure orgs in Derbyshire (June 2004)	Questionnaire survey of VCS in Hampshire with 248 responses (April 2004)	Questionnaire survey of VCS in Hereford & Worc with 434 responses (July 2004)	Survey of 288 VCS in Merseyside i (94% w/ less than 50 staff) (June 2004)	247 VCS in Oxfordshire; divided by size for analysis (Aug 2004)	Evaluation of pilot ICT support service; 11 participating orgs responded to questionnaire (Mar 2004)
Computer use/ownership	97%	82%	All using PCs, but 1/3 of hardware outdated	66.5% of respondents	Only 12% report not making use of ICT; Ratio 0.8 PC to 1 staff	88% using ICT; 1.8:1 ratio	63% use ICT	
ICT Importance	85% 'vital' 12% Fairly Imp less than .5% do not use ICT	30% overall 'high import'; 60% of those with ICT claimed 'high import'			Over 90% with PC rate as 'vital' or 'important'			
IT Strategy / Plan	32% YES		27% have 'proactive' strategy; 4% no strategy	Obstacles to strat planning: Cost 67%; Tech knowledge 37.1%	V rare in med size orgs approx 12%; In v Lg orgs, 41% have strategy		No coherent pattern to planning – overall significant number with no strategy	
IT Budget	51% YES	82% 'don't know';	40% no budget; only 3 had replacement policy	32% YES	12% overall 1.3% for v small rising to 25% for med and 66% for v large)		15% planned and budget for ICT	82% in study did not have an ICT budget
Funding for ICT	Only 20% say funders happy to fund capital & running		75% report funding a prob for IT requirements				49% through grants; 30% Council/parent body; 19% donations;	
Decision-making/ Sources of advice	30% have Board/Mgmt expertise; 31% internal expert; 20% unpaid expert		Little specialist IT expertise on Board; Rely on commercial suppliers for advice		57% commercial source; 27% VSC service;		42% planning by named staff member; 22% no strategy;	

Perception of 'ICT Fitness'	68% completely or reasonably satisfied with decision-making		Over 50% rate their IT provision as 'excellent' or 'good'						
Software / Operating System			Over ½ had no standard OS or software						Predominantly diff versions of OS and office software in single offices
Network	80% have some network; 42% of all PCs networked		82% with network; 26% of these are peer-to-peer	47% (32% client-server)	52% with computers have network;	40% (28% client-server / 12% peer-to-peer)			50%
Email / Internet access	73% access email/Internet (not sure where to get measurement – Q21 187+504?)	67%	All 22 use email regularly	70.5% have access; but only 50% of these are centrally managed	45% for smaller org; nearly 100% for med & lg orgs; (overall 64%)	82% (35% still dia-up)	76% of those with computers; 27% of those with connection say all staff use it		
Email communication with trustees	80%				Where using email for one purpose, 30% use it to communicate w/Trustees		25% of those connected use it for networking & comm		
Email communication with clients	52%				Less than 50%				
Broadband	38% of those with Internet connection (691?)	70% of those w/ connection using dial-up, including over 50% of the larger orgs.	77% use broadband	43% with Internet connection	22% of all respondents	28% brdbnd 14% ISDN; 4% leased line (of all respondents)			27% with Internet access use Broadband; 73% dial-up
Laptops/ wireless	9% of those networked (759) have wireless		Use increasing; Laptops account for 1/5 of PCs	Wireless networking is 'rare'	V few using wireless				

VPN	7% of those with network		2 of 22 (just under 10%)		V few – 16% of orgs with multiple offices			
Linux / Open source	1% of all respondents			'negligible'				
Security policy	35% YES; only 30% do any security training			23% have security policy				
Anti-virus	41% Rigorous 14% Partial		95% report using AV software	69% Yes, but only 84% regular update result in 40% not taking basic precautions	Approx ½ using AV			27% no virus protection or not aware it should be updated; 27% had been affected by viruses
Back-up	27% Rigorous 13% Partial			33% have back-up policy				
Firewall	32% Rigorous 9% Partial		All reported using firewall	36% Yes, but only 56% updated; therefore less than 20% properly protected	29% of those with Internet access			
Support / Maintenance	41% External person/org; 32% Internal; 35% Accidental Techie 11% Vol/Trustee		50% no inter. expertise or suppt contract 75% named indiv resp for network as part of wider role;	77% rely on external support – in 50% there is designated internal person (usually part of wider role)	32% ext contract; 27% external ad-hoc; 35% reg volunteer; 15.4 int more than ½ ; 21% int person less than ½ time	67% have neither staff allocated or ext contract for ICT support /maint	33% - adhoc from friends or volunteers; 31% by staff member (not w/specific skills); 26% for ext suppier/consultant	
Skills/Training	28% training analysis; 44% adhoc approach to training		75% senior mgr felt staff do not have adequate IT skills	39% carry-out in-house training but this is mostly unstructured desk training	31% no budget/priority for IT training; this diminishes with size of org.		43% informal, in-house peer support; 23% external courses;	

Website	74% own; 6% 3rd party 14% plan to 4% 'no plans'		81% have dedicated site albeit with limited functionality	44% yes – 68% of these reg updated; 30% rely on volunteer design/maint support	Approx 40% overall; 63% med & lg orgs; 40% sites in med orgs designed by volunteers			36% had website; 100% of those had been set up by volunteer or someone no longer with org
Website Accessibility			Only 1/3 with websites complied with standards		Poor results; only 2/3 w website answered Ques, and ½ of those 'didn't know' whether they complied;			
Service Delivery					Relatively few			